

# NEWS TODAY

## MSMEs facing Challenges in Doing Business Report released by ASSOCHAM-EGROW

### Key findings

- MSMEs contribute nearly **30% of GDP, 45% of manufacturing output and 46% of exports** in fiscal year 2024.
- By 2047, manufacturing and services sector are projected to **employ 67% of workforce and contribute over 75% of GDP**.

### About MSME sector

- MSMEs are essential to global economy constituting 90% of businesses, and **contribute 50% of global GDP**.
- Indian MSME sector is **projected to grow to \$1 Trillion by 2028**.

### Challenges faced by MSME sector

- **Delay in registration:** Due to cumbersome registration process, and inefficient single window clearance system.
- **Confusion about Government schemes:** Lack of awareness and confusion among schemes, and lack of Centre-State coordination.
  - ⊖ E.g. **Complex registration under GST**, frequent amendments driving up cost of doing business.
- **Administrative burden:** Due to **overlapping documentation for Professional Tax, Contract Labour, Minimum Wages** etc. hindering their operations.
- **Labour issues:** Lack of well-defined trial period for new hires, unskilled workers, variation in wages across states, inefficient training centres etc.
- **Finance issues:** Limited access to institutional finance, opaque loan application process and **lack of collateral** etc. hinders their growth.
- **Export issues:** Inadequate infrastructure, **Lack of Environmental, social and governance (ESG) reports** by Indian MSMEs impacts exports competitiveness.

### Recommendations

- **Streamline registration through single window clearance** with dedicated helpline, and standardized checklist for documents.
- **Dedicated MSME Coordination Council** to streamline scheme implementation, Simplify GST registration, and reduced frequency of amendments.
- **Workforce management** via uniform labour wages, affordable labour insurance schemes, industry aligned vocational training programmes.
- **Adequate financing**, enhance role and reach of MUDRA, develop fintech solutions, and focus on financial literacy.
- Strengthening infrastructure and a tailored ESG framework for MSMEs to enhance their cost competitiveness.

## National Green Tribunal (NGT) asks CPCB to prepare pan India guidelines to tackle illegal sand mining

NGT stated that **extraction of silica sand from silica sand mines** causes health hazards like silicosis (lung disease caused by inhaling crystalline silica dust) to workers.

- NGT also observed that **Silica sand washing plants lack proper record-keeping**, and Statutory Regulators neglect compliance with laws.
- Silica sand is produced by **crushing sandstone or quartzite of open texture**, and washing and grading it to yield requisite grain distribution.

### About Sand Resource

- Sand is **world's second-most exploited natural resource**, after water. (UNEP)
- Sand is classified as a **minor mineral** under **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act)**.

### About Sand Mining

- **Definition: Removal of primary natural sand and resources** like minerals, metals **from natural environment** (land, rivers, etc.) for extracting **valuable crushed stone** etc. for subsequent processing.
- **Factors responsible for illegal sand mining:** High demand for sand in construction; organized sand mafias; lack of sustainable alternatives etc.

### Consequence of Illegal Sand Mining

- **Flooding and Sedimentation:** Alters river course causing flooding and sedimentation, loss of fertile land, damage to infrastructure etc.
- **Groundwater Depletion:** Lowers groundwater table, affecting wells and causing water scarcity.
- **Biodiversity Loss:** Disrupts aquatic habitats, threatens endangered river species like gharial, freshwater turtles, otters, river dolphins etc.

### Steps taken to tackle Illegal Sand Mining

- **Section 23C of MMDR Act** allows **State Governments and UT Administrations** to create rules to prevent **illegal mining**, transportation, and storage of minerals.
- **Sustainable Sand Management Guidelines (2016)** and **Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines (2020)** focus on restoring river ecology.
- **Sand Mining Framework (2018)** promotes alternatives like **Manufactured Sand** and sand from **Overburden of coal mines**.
- **Mining Surveillance System** to use **space technology** for tracking and controlling illegal sand mining.

## 40 years of Bhopal Gas Tragedy

### About Bhopal Gas Tragedy

- On 3rd December 1984, **highly toxic Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked** from a pesticide plant owned by Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL).
  - ⊖ Even after four decades of tragedy, hundreds of tonnes of toxic waste remain on premises of UCIL.
- It was **India's first major Chemical (industrial) disaster**.

### Other Chemical Disasters in India

- **Ammonia Gas Leak at Chennai (2024):** Due to damaged gas pipeline caused by cyclone Michaung.
- **Vizag Gas Leak (2020):** Styrene gas leak at LG Polymers in Visakhapatnam.
- **Tughlakabad Gas Leak (2017):** Chemical Chloro methylpyridine (used in pesticides manufacturing) leaked from container.

### Reasons for Chemical Disasters

- Process and safety systems failures due to Human, Technical, and Management errors; Induced effect of natural calamities; Hazardous waste processing/ disposal; Terrorist attack/ unrest leading to sabotage etc.

### Impact of Chemical Disasters

- **Health:** Exposure to toxic chemicals can lead to **reproductive health of women, respiratory issues, cancer, and genetic mutations**.
- **Environmental:** Soil, water, and air contamination, further disrupting ecosystems and biodiversity.
- **Crop health:** Exposure to hazardous chemicals damages plant cells, **inhibits photosynthesis, stunting growth, and decreased productivity**.
- **Bioaccumulation:** Released **toxins can enter food chain**, leading to bioaccumulation.

### About Methyl Isocyanate (CH<sub>3</sub>NCO)

- **Volatile, colorless liquid** that is **extremely flammable, and potentially explosive when mixed with air**.
- Reacts with water, giving off heat and **producing methylamine and carbon dioxide**.
- **Liquid and vapor are toxic when inhaled**, ingested, or exposed to the eyes or skin.

### Initiatives taken to tackle Chemical accidents

- **NDMA guidelines on Chemical Disaster Management:** Inspection System by Regulatory Bodies, Establish Information networking system with states and districts on priority basis etc.
- **Explosives Act, 1884:** To control manufacture, possession, use, transportation and importation of Explosives.
- Chemical Accidents (Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Response) Rules 1996.

## 13th National Seed Congress (NSC) organized by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, concludes

The NSC focused on "**Innovating for a Sustainable Seed Ecosystem**," highlighting seed technologies, biofortified crops, and climate-resilient practices like Direct Seeded Rice (DSR).

- **Sustainable Seed Ecosystem:** Ensures timely access to affordable, quality seeds of suitable crop varieties for farmers (FAO).

### Significance of quality seeds:

- Ensures **genetic and physical purity of the crops** & capacity to withstand the **adverse conditions**.
- Seedlings produced **will be more vigorous, fast growing and can resist pest**.
- Development of **root system will be more efficient** that aids **absorption of nutrients** efficiently and result in **higher yield**.
  - ⊖ Good quality seeds of improved varieties ensure **higher yield at least 10 – 12 %**

### Challenges in India's seed ecosystem

- **Seed Replacement Rate (SRR):** In India SRR is **around 15 – 20%** which may vary with crop varieties. However, it's **100% for hybrid seeds**.
  - ⊖ **SRR:** It's the percentage of a crop area sown with certified seeds instead of farm-saved seeds.
- **Monoculture Farming:** Widespread use of Bt cotton reduces biodiversity and increases pest vulnerability.
- **Seed Market Monopoly:** Multinational companies (e.g., Bayer) dominate seed markets, limiting access to local seeds.
- **Other issues:** Pending Seed Bill, lack of seed entrepreneurship, etc.

### Steps taken by the government

- **National Seed Corporation (NSC):** Established in 1963, it produces foundation and certified seeds for 600+ varieties across 60 crops.
- **Seeds Act, 1966:** Regulates seed quality and establishes State Seed Certification Agencies.
- **National Seed Policy, 2002:** Focuses on varietal development, seed quality, and intellectual property protection.
- **Seed Village Programme (Beej Gram Yojana):** Improve farmers' saved seed quality.
- **National Seed Reserve:** Maintains reserves to ensure seed availability during climatic disruptions.

## United Kingdom's Parliament votes in favour of historic assisted dying bill for terminally ill adults

The **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill** would give terminally ill adults with **less than six months** to live the **right to die** once the request has been **signed off by two doctors** and a **high court judge**.

- **Assisted dying:** Terminally ill patient receives lethal drugs from medical practitioner and self-administers them to end their own life.
- **Euthanasia:** Physician deliberately administers lethal drugs to end patient's life, potentially to relieve suffering, even if not terminally ill.

### Euthanasia/ Assisted dying: Ethical dilemmas of ending life

#### ➤ Pros:

- ⊕ **Alleviates suffering:** Provides relief from chronic misery and vegetative states; offers a humane way to end prolonged suffering.
- ⊕ **Preserves patient's dignity & autonomy:** By recognizing the patient's right to make end-of-life decisions.
- ⊕ **Professional & ethical approach:** As it involves careful evaluation by a medical board; includes legal pre-scrutiny to prevent potential misuse, etc.

#### ➤ Cons:

- ⊕ **Ethical & moral challenges:** Conflicts with medical ethics of preserving life; creating a moral dilemma for physicians trained to save lives.
- ⊕ **Risk of misuse:** Danger of vested interests (e.g., organ transplantation considerations), etc.
- ⊕ **Sociocultural & philosophical sensitivities:** Conflicts with cultural and **religious beliefs** (e.g., **Christian theology**) about life and death.
  - ◆ E.g., **Immanuel Kant** says that the voluntary act of destroying oneself can **"never, under any circumstances, be regarded as allowable."**

## Union Health Minister inaugurates World AIDS Day 2024 event

The **National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)**, under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), has been observing World AIDS Day annually on December 1 since 1992.

### About HIV Virus

- **Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV):** It attacks and destroys the **CD4 cells** (CD4 T lymphocyte) of the immune system. **CD4 cells are a type of white blood cell** that play a major role in **protecting the body from infection**.
- **HIV belongs to the Retrovirus family:** Retroviruses have their instructions written on **Ribonucleic acid (RNA)**. When a retrovirus invades cells, it changes its RNA to look like cells' instructions (**Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)**).
  - ⊕ Then it cuts **cells' DNA** and **inserts its instructions into them**, effectively **hijacking cellular genetic machinery**.
  - ⊕ **Antiretroviral therapy (ART)** is **treatment of people infected with HIV using anti-HIV drugs**
- If left untreated, **HIV can lead to the disease AIDS** (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

### HIV status in India:

- Over 2.4 million people living with HIV in India, 3rd largest in the world.
- New HIV cases in **India have decreased by 44% since 2010** which is **higher than the global reduction rate of 39%**.

### Initiatives taken by India

- India has adopted a **90-90-90 target for combating AIDS**. **This target was later increased to 95-95-95**, out of which **81% people with AIDS have been identified, 88% are being given ART and viral load of 97% identified people has been suppressed**.
- **National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) Phase-V:** Aims to reduce annual new HIV infections and AIDS-related mortalities by 80% by 2025-26 from the baseline value of 2010.
- **Others:** India's HIV and AIDS (Prevention & Control) Act, 2017; 'Mission Sampark' initiative (2017).

## Also in News



### Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference (AOMSUC-14)

AOMSUC-14 is being held in New Delhi.

#### About AOMSUC

- It is **held annually** since its **first edition in Beijing in 2010**.
- It is a key event for meteorologists, earth scientists, satellite operators, and students.
- It is hosted by **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Objective**
  - ⊕ Promote importance of **satellite observations**.
  - ⊕ Advance satellite **remote sensing** science.
  - ⊕ Facilitate **dialogue** and **collaboration** between satellite operators and users.
  - ⊕ Inform community about status and future plans of international space programs.



### Independent Director Databank (IDDB)

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) organized an MoU signing with executive search leaders to enhance the Independent Director Databank (IDDB).

#### About Independent Directors Databank

- It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** for the capacity building of the existing **Independent Directors**.
  - ⊕ An independent director is a member of a board of directors who is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the company and has no material relationship with it.
- Allows companies to register and connect with individuals having the right skills for Independent Director roles.
- Developed under the Companies Act 2013.



### High Risk Food

FSSAI has classified **packaged drinking water as 'High Risk Food Category'**.

#### About High Risk Food

- High risk foods are ready to eat foods that support **multiplication of pathogenic bacteria that could be harmful**.
- These include dairy products; meat products including poultry; fish and fish products, etc.
- Food products that come under High Risk category are **subjected to mandatory risk-based inspections**.
- All Central Licensed Manufacturer/Processors under High Risk Food Categories shall get its business **audited by FSSAI recognised food safety auditing agency every year**.



### Cyclone Fengal

IMD has issued red and orange alerts for multiple districts in Kerala and Tamilnadu due to Cyclone Fengal's residual impact.

#### About Cyclone Fengal

- It is a **tropical storm**. Cyclone is a large-scale system of air that rotates around centre of a low-pressure area.
- NDMA classifies cyclones broadly into **two categories**:
  - ⊕ **Extratropical cyclones**: Occur **outside of tropic**.
  - ⊕ **Tropical cyclones**: Develop in **regions between Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer**. They are most devastating storms on Earth.

#### IMD Colour Coding for Cyclone warning

- Pre-cyclone watch (Yellow); Cyclone Alert (Orange); Cyclone warning (Red)



### Global report on infection prevention and control 2024

A new global report on infection prevention and control (IPC) by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** shows there has been **slow progress in addressing critical gaps to prevent healthcare-associated infections (HAIs)**.

#### Key findings

- **71% of countries now have an active IPC programme**, just 6% met all of the WHO IPC minimum requirements in 2023-2024.
- **Financial and resource challenges** E.g., Nearly a quarter of countries reported shortages in their supply of personal protective equipment in 2023.
- Globally, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and WHO, **nearly 3.5 million people can lose their lives due to HAIs every year up to 2050**.



### Exercise in news

13th edition of Joint Military Exercise Agni Warrior (XAW-2024) concluded in Maharashtra.

#### About Agni Warrior

- It is a bilateral exercise between **Indian Army and Singapore Armed Forces**.
- **Objective**: To maximise mutual understanding of drills and procedures to achieve jointness as a multinational force under United Nations Charter.

1st edition of **Joint Table Top Exercise, CINBAX** between **Indian Army and Cambodian Army** has commenced in Pune.

#### About CINBAX

- It is a planning exercise aimed to **wargame conduct of joint Counter Terrorism operations** under Chapter VII of UN Charter.
- It also involves **discussion on information operations, cyber warfare, hybrid warfare, logistics and casualty management, HADR operations** etc.



### Global One-Stop Centres (OSC)

Government has approved 9 global OSCs for Indian women in distress.

#### About Global OSCs

- **Aim**: To **provide comprehensive assistance to women in vulnerable situations**, addressing their immediate needs and offering critical support.
- They include **7 OSCs with provision of shelter homes** in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia (Jeddah & Riyadh) and **2 OSCs without shelter homes** in Toronto and Singapore.
- **Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)** will play a vital role in extending welfare measures to distressed Indian nationals, particularly women.
  - ⊕ ICWF, set up in 2009, stands extended to all Indian Missions and Posts abroad.



### Sponge city

The emerging concept and construction of **"sponge cities"** is an effective approach to solving urban floods.

#### About Sponge city:

- A sponge city refers to **sustainable urban development** including flood control, water conservation, water quality improvement and natural ecosystem protection.
  - ⊕ E.g., green roofs, constructed wetlands, increased tree cover etc.
- **Benefits**: Sponge cities increase air humidity, regulate urban microclimates, and reduce public health risks.
- **Sponge cities around the world**: Tirana in Albania is creating a ring forest to clean the air; Berlin's use of green roofs and vertical gardens

## Places in news



### Nigeria (Capital: Abuja).

**At least 54 dead following northern Nigeria river boat capsizing**

- **Located on the western coast of Africa**.
- **Political features**: Nigeria is bordered by Niger (north), Chad and Cameroon (east), the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean (south), Benin (west).
- **Geographical features**:
  - ⊕ **The major drainage areas in Nigeria**: The Niger-Benue basin, the Lake Chad basin, and the Gulf of Guinea basin.
  - ⊕ **Major River**: The Niger River; it's the third longest river in Africa, after the Nile and the Congo.
    - ◆ One of the lakes formed in the **'backwaters of Niger'** is **Lake Faguibine** (it's dry since 1970s).
- **Major lake**: Lake Chad, an endorheic freshwater lake located at the conjunction of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger.

